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# Integrity

confession and guilt



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Not too long ago we went to a lecture on confession and psychotherapy during which we heard three surprising things: we heard confession compared to the new wonder drugs used to relieve the anxiety of the mentally ill; the average priest, we were told, could handle most any case that would be referred to a psychiatrist; and the only reason a Catholic would have to resort to a psychiatrist would be that the "priest doesn't have enough time."

This lecture was one of the instances of general confusion that made it seem especially necessary to us to have an issue on *Confession and Guilt*. First of all, it seems important to reiterate the supernatural character and purpose of confession, for in a well-meaning attempt to claim everything for it (including its value as a remedy for neurotic anxiety) there is danger of naturalizing the sacrament. Confession no more proves its efficacy by relieving emotional anguish than communion proves its value as a spiritual food because by receiving it some of the saints could get along without any physical food.

## **guilt feelings can persist**

The purpose of confession is to right what is wrong morally, to restore the soul to grace; this is its sacramental efficiency which must not be confused with any other effect which confession may or may not have. For it may or may not have the effect of relieving the feeling of guilt. Whether it does or not is beside the point of its main purpose and the priest's activity as a judge who forgives sin. But the catechism teaches us that in confession the priest is not only judge, but teacher, doctor and father. Through the priest in confession the penitent experiences God's fatherhood along with the communication of Christ's teaching and healing power. And through these the penitent's sense of guilt may be relieved. But feelings can persist after their cause has ceased—as a slight cause can trigger off an overwhelming emotion. Such non-objective feelings are not the sign of guilt but a temporal punishment to be carried as a cross—alleviated by sacramental penance, or, if they are a serious obstacle to sanctity, removed by psychiatric attention.

### **you're your own judge**

The priest as confessor is not a psychotherapist digging out hidden or repressed guilt. He must believe the penitent, and the penitent is the one who himself establishes the fact of his objective guilt by making a threefold judgment. In examining his conscience he is like a prosecutor who says: This is what I have done. ("I have missed Sunday Mass.") He makes the judgment of a jury that what he has done is morally imputable. ("I missed Mass willfully, with knowledge of what I was doing, freely and without any excuse.") And thirdly, as the judge he pronounces sentence on his own action. ("This willful missing of Mass was a mortal offense against God and deserving of eternal damnation.") The only judgment the priest makes is the judgment of whether or not the penitent shows sufficient signs of contrition and purpose of amendment to be pardoned, to be absolved from his sins.

It is indeed unfortunate if a new emphasis on the psychological, *subjective* effects of confession (what it does for the penitent's feelings) should obscure not only its *objective* effects (in righting what was wrong) but also its *social* character. Indeed it may be surprising to hear confession referred to as "social" at all, since we are used to thinking of it as the exclusive concern of one particular soul and God. Yet confession traditionally started with the recitation of the *Confiteor* by the penitent, a testimony to all the saints of his guilt and his desire to be reinstated in grace. Absolution does not merely restore a soul to God, but also restores a cell of Christ's Mystical Body. The absolution from excommunication, which precedes absolution from sin in the formula used in all adult confessions, itself testifies to the social character of the sacrament: "I absolve you from everything that keeps you away from the social unity of the Church."

For those for whom it is not a necessity but a "luxury"—in other words, for children and adults who have committed only venial sins—confession again manifests its social character. For in making reception of this sacrament a requisite for gaining plenary indulgences the Church asks that, even though they are not guilty of mortal sin, her children should come and have themselves sacramentally declared in the name of God members of the Church, before they partake of the treasure of the Communion of Saints.

Emil Antonucci designed the cover and inside illustrations for  
this issue of INTEGRITY.



Hans G. Furth

## guilt feelings - good and bad

*A psychologist discusses  
the difference between neurotic guilt feelings  
and the feeling of guilt that can be a  
constructive emotion.*

There seems to be a strange, un-verbalized agreement among professionals in the field of mental health on the subject of guilt. Maybe it is part of the general conspiracy to relegate religion to the place of an immature escape mechanism. Or maybe it is because in our professional work we only rarely encounter guilt feelings that could be called as normal and as mature as any other feelings like love or joy or disappointment.

"Guilt feelings are unhealthy, they are signs of immature childishness, cause of neurotic fear and nervousness; you must grow out of them." Such slogans can be easily picked up in current papers and magazines. The ordinary person on the street would perhaps consciously like to embrace these opinions, the intelligent devout believer is bewildered. "Is there really something abnormal in feeling guilty?" he will ask himself. "Is my whole religion based on something abnormal, immature, neurotic?"

This is the one side of the picture. It challenges the very



existence of the positive, constructive aspect of guilt and makes neurotic guilt the internal foundation of all religion. On the other side there is the undeniable fact that thousands of our fellowmen go around with a very real but also very vague guilt feeling within them, a feeling that seems to have nothing to do with reasonable ethical values.

### **obsessed by guilt**

The other day I had occasion to hear the story of a successful business man. This man had surrounded himself with a whole battery of ceremonies and precautions that had as their one aim to make sure he would never be found with only one other person in a room. This man was suffering from a severe obsessional neurosis. The first conclusion you may jump to (as did the patient himself) is that he is a distrustful kind of person, afraid that one person might do him some harm, while in the presence of a third an attack is less likely. Even if it were correct, this specious reasoning would make his behavior merely less unreasonable. As a matter of fact the real explanation is quite different.

This man was not married, he was the only son of a doting mother who had spoiled him and given him little chance to become an independent adult. His father died when he was not yet a year old and left them a profitable business in which the father's brother was a partner. The mother died when the boy was sixteen years old, at which time he moved into his uncle's home and was introduced into the business. Five years later when living in his own apartment he began to notice a definite feeling of tension and uneasiness whenever he happened to have a friend alone with him. As soon as there was a crowd the tension would subside. From then onward he fell into the habit of inviting at least two persons at the same time and when he found it difficult to have them leave together he increased the number to three. Gradually this fear of being alone with only one other person extended to his office and put him in many unpleasant situations. For instance, he could never have a conference with but one other person. Even when he was alone in his room he had to be certain that in the adjoining room there was not just one other person. His obsession took on the form of periodically opening all doors and counting the number of persons that came across his way according to a complicated

scheme. If he could not perform these precautionary measures, tension and anxiety would mount so as to become unbearable.

During therapy it was discovered that his peculiar compulsion to surround himself with at least one witness whenever he was with one other person stemmed from an unconscious hostile and guilt feeling. The reason he had given at first turned out, as so often, to be merely a camouflage or a screen behind which the real, but unconscious motive lay hidden. It is impossible to go here into all details but in essence his neurosis had come about this way: the mother not only had not given him a chance to learn to become independent, she likewise gave him no opportunity to express his innate aggressivity. She loved him too much, too possessively for the boy even to dare to show openly or even rehearse merely in fantasy the slightest hostility toward her. The mother had made it quite clear to the boy's infantile mind that obedience and conformity were required of him as a necessary condition of her love; at the same time her love for him was so excessive and feeding the child's self-love in such a way that he had taken into his mind the following notion in a very strict and absolute sense: "You have to be obedient and entirely conform to your mother's wishes. If you do not, this is an act of aggression and will be punished with loss of support and love." Now to an infant to lose his parent's love is unbearable, tantamount to annihilation.

### **the small child's mind**

In the very small child's mind there is no appreciable boundary between fantasy and reality. If you wish evil to a person, you have already killed him. If you dream of a castle, you have it already. We all have noticed how an infant's feelings change abruptly from one extreme to another. They have not yet learned to differentiate, to delay their reactions. Now the child is bubbling over with love and happiness. His omnipotent parents are entirely good. The next moment the child feels hungry, he cries desperately and every second of waiting means utter frustration and helplessness. It is impossible that hostile feelings toward the parent should not arise. What does "hostile" mean in this age of extremes? The good parents have become bad, utterly and entirely bad. Here are the seeds of hatred, pure and simple, a desire to destroy the destroyer, to kill and annihilate the opposing or nonsupporting person.

All this is done in fantasy. With increasing maturity the child normally learns two things: first, to love in a more secure, less selfish way; secondly, to accept his hostile feelings for what they really are and use them as a spur toward higher attainments and a better grasp of reality. The four-year-old child who has to wait for his dinner will normally no longer be infuriated against his mother who delays his immediate satisfaction. He is beginning to learn to love his mother even if she does not immediately serve his pressing need, and his hostile feelings or rather the guilt engendered by them has helped him to accept the mother's standards and real and objective values. Moreover he is beginning to realize that his aggressive fantasies toward his mother do not really harm her nor bring upon him the feared retaliation.

### **the roots of neurotic guilt**

It is to this time that the roots of neurotic guilt feelings must be traced. If in the process of learning to love and to assert oneself something goes wrong, there will result the inability to love maturely and to handle hostility successfully. The aggressive, self-assertive impulses that cannot be expressed outwardly nor even merely in fantasy because the sense of love is not securely established, will be turned inwardly against his own ego and will pervade the child's unconscious fantasy.

Our business man had accepted the standards of his mother without being sure about his mother's love. Why was he not sure? Because the kind of love his mother had for him did not permit him to express any aggression toward her. The sense of dependence on her love was so overpowering in the infant boy that not even a fantasied aggression against her was allowed in his consciousness.

What happened? The boy repressed all conscious hostility and became an obedient son. Unconsciously the hostility remained and the concomitant guilt feelings were so strong that all this had to be removed from conscious awareness. Every attainment, every self-assertion, every success merely increased the amount of repressed hostility. When many years later the obsessive symptom made its appearance it had its dynamic cause in the above-mentioned, undigested, undeveloped, infantile feelings of aggression and guilt. Unconsciously his whole life of success in business was an aggression against his mother, a sign that he wanted to do away with her.



This heinous thought aroused intense guilt feelings which he vainly attempted to alleviate by his neurotic symptom. It was as if he said to himself: "I have a witness whom I can produce if need be and who can vouch that I did not kill my mother." At the same time the witness also helped him to overcome his unconscious impulse to behave aggressively toward his mother. Obviously for the patient, to be alone with one person meant to be alone with his mother and this association produced such strong hostility and guilt that he had to have recourse to the peculiar behavior described.

### **a debt they can never repay**

This is an extreme example, to be sure, but it brings out the essential dynamics of neurotic guilt feelings. There are many other types of neurotic behavior associated with guilt feelings; indeed many psychiatrists will go so far as to assert that guilt is an all-important, determining factor in every neurosis. Sometimes these guilt feelings are felt subjectively, sometimes they can only be inferred from outward behavior. You may know some persons who behave as if they owed some debt which they can never repay, who feel continually uncomfortable as if they did not live up to a standard, in spite of the fact that they usually are more conscientious and considerate than the average person. Some might go so far as to be always in anticipation of punishment or even bring upon themselves continual failure and misfortune as if to pay for a crime of which they are not conscious. These and similar feelings cause great suffering. They make a person's life miserable and often bring unhappiness to his family and friends. In varying degrees they incapacitate a man in several or all spheres of activity.

It is these feelings which psychologists have in mind when they speak of neurotic guilt feelings. The felt guilt is not based on a known transgression, is not related to a consciously accepted inner law. It is the price an unfortunate ego is paying for being permitted to indulge temporarily in some infantile fantasy.

This statement should not sound so strange after reading the account of the neurotic business man. We know that in neurotic guilt feelings we are not dealing with reason. Reason and objective reality have had no say in this matter.

It is surprising (or should I say significant) how unwilling reason is to accept the unreasonableness even of our normal be-

havior. None of it is entirely and perfectly reasonable. That this is so should appear quite obvious to anyone who considers that the "age of reason" only begins around the age of five (at the earliest) and that our behavior after five does not constitute a clean break with our past.

However there are limits within which an average normal person develops his personality. Patterns of actions are laid down in infancy. These are modified, adjusted to growing experience, at times discarded, by a slow process of maturation and learning and somewhere around the age of twenty we have, or at least we expect, a mature personality with mature values and problems. It will always be possible to trace some infantile behavior even in a mature, normal person. That is expected, and no one should call a person neurotic because of some slight neurotic tendencies.

### **who's a neurotic?**

Who does not know of instances in which he finds himself emotionally uncomfortable although no reasonable cause can be assigned? Take a man who just cannot get along with a particular neighbor. This type, as it were, provokes him to argue, to contradict, to fight. Most probably this unreasonable behavior is caused by some infantile memory that lingers in him and makes him associate the present object with some unpleasant experience of the past. As long as these instances are few and rare and exceptions rather than the rule they will not seriously interfere with normal, adult values. In this light we may truly say that the "normal" person does not exist. It is but a question of degree, or to put it in the words of a well-known analyst: the normal person is merely the less neurotic person.

Now this is precisely the point. Where neurotic patterns of behavior dominate to such an extent that the core of the personality is invaded and hardly any sphere of activity is left where these patterns do not leave their mark, we are justified in speaking of a neurotic person. I have a friend who feels uncomfortable when he eats more than one kind of fruit after his meal. He has "guilt" feelings. Otherwise he lives a fairly happy and productive life. I would not call my friend a neurotic although his guilt feelings could certainly be called neurotic. Since eating one or two kinds of fruits does not form an essential part or value in this person's

life it seems best to smile at his oddity and let it go at that.

But I know another person who carries a sort of guilt feeling almost constantly with him. He lacks spontaneity that is so refreshing to life. He thinks he should do better on his job, he is never really satisfied with himself. He is not married, for how could he ever estimate himself good enough for any prospective partner? Would you call this person a neurotic? He certainly suffers much more profoundly than my first friend. But an outsider who would meet him in passing or even his acquaintances who know him for years would observe nothing abnormal apart from a certain forced conscientiousness and drive for perfection. However, because this trait of perfectionism and concomitant guilt feelings pervade his whole personality, and in a very real sense cripple its harmonious development, I would be inclined to call him a neurotic, at least in the wide sense.

The term *neurosis* in the strict sense is reserved for full-blown symptoms, or patterns of behavior altogether at odds with a mature view of life. They are anachronisms in the sense that the main reason or cause of the particular behavior is no longer the present, adult reality but an object that lies far back in the dim past of the earliest childhood. This was exemplified in the symptom of our business man. His feelings of tension and unconscious guilt did not refer to the present situation but to an infantile fantasy and he reacted to the fantasy in an infantile way.

From the foregoing it should be clear that what psychologists call "neurotic guilt" and what theologians call "guilt feelings" because of a sin committed have nothing in common but the name and a similar subjective, unpleasant emotion. The first is essentially an unrealistic process, uncontrolled by reason; the other is an emotion following a reasonable judgment on a voluntary action. Neurotic guilt feelings have their primary root at the time of infancy when no responsible action is possible or expected.

### **spotting neurotic guilt**

Having said so much I hasten to add that in practice the task of spotting neurotic guilt is easy enough, but neurotic guilt itself can be quite complex. First the neurotic has a tendency to pin his "neurotic guilt" on "normal" guilt feelings. Our business man thought that his mistrust of others was the cause of his peculiar

behavior. Similarly a neurotic Catholic will easily find some plausible explanation for real guilt feelings under which he can hide from himself and others his neurotic guilt. A Catholic may refuse to go out, to mix with others and will pretend that the reason for it is the frail flesh which would be exposed to great temptation. In reality, he is unconsciously trying to avoid the neurotic guilt feelings which would be aroused through an enjoyable contact with others. While it is quite obvious that the business man (if he were a Catholic) could not go to confession to accuse himself of being with only one other person in a room—particularly as the cause of the guilt feeling and the guilt feeling itself were not conscious to him—it is not so in the case of the Catholic who might accuse himself of having enjoyed impure thoughts or of not having sufficiently avoided occasions of sins. In this context I remember the wise remark a confessor of nuns made to me to the effect that he would never pass by a general accusation that seemed to worry the penitent very much without insisting on carefully specifying the occasion and the object. The neurotic, he thought, will usually be vague and general and the guilt feeling will worry him out of proportion to the accused fault. The absence of a reasonable proportion between the subjective emotion of guilt, the objective fault and the general value system of the self-accusing person seemed to him the most valuable criterion for discovering a neurotic substructure below the surface of normal guilt. On this topic he added smilingly: "You cannot confess original sin."

How right he was! Of course it is true, if you like, that all neurotic guilt stems ultimately from pride and lack of charity. However an infant is not capable of such acts and can only follow his impulses which might later on be integrated with responsible acts. Revelation insinuates that there is some disturbance in our impulse life due to original sin. On this score the statement that neurotic guilt is due to original sin is in a certain sense tenable, just as any failure, materially or spiritually, illness, unhappiness and death can be called a manifestation of original sin.

### **immature guilt feelings**

The other reason it is not always so easy to diagnose neurotic guilt feelings has its cause in the very important and often neglected fact that guilt feelings frequently have a childish character that



strikes the observer at variance with the rest of the mature personality. I am speaking here of what I would like to call immature guilt feelings. All too often we are confronted with guilt feelings that are normal enough but do not fit harmoniously into the value system and overall philosophy of an adult person. A man will feel guilty for an objective offense but for a wrong motive, e.g. a lawyer feels guilty for having acted unprofessionally not because of the intrinsic value of the ethical standards but because his standing among his colleagues is jeopardized.

A more subtle way of exhibiting immature guilt feelings consists in not observing the proper hierarchy within the integrated value system. That would be the case of a Catholic who feels terribly guilty if he is negligent at work, but much more lightly passes over the more essential value of charity toward his neighbor.

These guilt feelings manifest an immature value system and, when it is a question of religion, an immature religion. This is an all important problem for the spiritual adviser; much should be said on this point but this is not the place to go into it at any length. It is indeed a pity that so many relatively mature persons are content with a childish grasp of religion and guilt associated with it.

### **guilt feelings are necessary!**

For—and here I am referring to the beginning of this article—there does exist a normal, healthy, mature guilt, one of the signs of a normal, healthy, mature religion. Guilt feelings are as vital and necessary to human life as any other feelings. Wherever you have values there you have guilt. The one is the counterpart of the other. Nor is guilt necessarily connected with religion since it is found in every sphere where values come in. Neither is guilt the only or primary force behind religion. All this could and should be said at much greater length and depth against those who cannot see the positive aspect of guilt feelings.

Guilt feelings are emotions and emotions are strong forces that shape human behavior. Just as within a neurotic personality structure these forces can be destructive so in the normal growth of an infant to adulthood they can help toward an ever higher attainment of mature values. Guilt keeps the neurotic a slave to fear and distorted fantasy; the mature man uses it in the service of love, reason and reality.



# the confessor and the analyst

*As against the general opinion held today that psychiatry should remain strictly neutral morally, Charleen Schwartz would maintain that moral guidance is necessary not outside but inside the therapeutic relationship. The correction of a moral-psychological disorder (neurosis) involves moral-psychological means, not moral and psychological. Theology and psychiatry must marry to be fruitful. Our readers will note that Dr. Schwartz gives an explanation of the genesis of neurosis different from that given by Hans Furth in his article.*

In the conflict leading to neurosis the patient could not succeed in bringing certain instinctual drives under the control of reason, even by duress. Neither did his conscience permit him to indulge these drives overtly in defiance of reason. So he resorted to a neurotic mechanism as a defense against carrying them out by *inhibiting* them. The neurotic mechanism is a "way" of bringing the desire under the control of reason without really doing so.

Neurosis, then, is an irrational solution, a make-believe order, a simulation of the rational control of the emotions. Thus it is a split from reason because it conceals the nature of the impulse from the person himself.

Our position is that the neurotic cannot be cured until he is morally strengthened to the point where he can admit and bring the emotion under the control of reason. Until he has this moral

strength he will never release it. This capacity is brought about by a moral strengthening of his conscious personality *at the same time* that he is being led to see the neurotic mechanism.

We do not mean a direct moral training of the pathological emotion in so far as it remains pathological, for this is out of the question. Such emotion is incapacitated, and one cannot ride a horse which isn't there. But our position is that the psychiatrist cannot remove the psychological disorders without the moral re-education of the conscious normal part of the personality, because *the emotions were inhibited in the first place due to a moral weakness, that is, the moral ego in its weakness could only inhibit the emotions as a defense against carrying them out.* That is why a neurotic emotional disorder falls under morality essentially.

The underlying principle here is that human emotions are not like the emotions in an animal. In man, as St. Thomas teaches, the emotions have an ordination to the dominion of reason, so that to consider emotional disorders apart from this ordination is to separate them from their essence, like the grin without the cat. It is just this false separation which takes the emotions out of the moral order, and once this is done, the position of moral neutrality follows logically enough.

### **moral-psychotherapy**

The methods and practice of moral-psychotherapy cannot be adequately described in an article, because what one does in a particular case depends on the limitations and capacities of the subject's conscious personality to receive this kind of education. Often, if not for the most part, it is indirect, taking the form of tentative suggestions, or by making moral constructions, just as one makes psychoanalytic constructions, not by moralizing or by "sermons," but moral nonetheless.

And this is just where the transference comes in, what we would call the "rational transference," which is essential for the cure and without which there can be no real moral re-education, for moral re-education begins when this rational **transference** is given spontaneously. Occasionally a person comes to an analysis prepared to give this spontaneous transference, but generally it has to be won by the analyst. In the severe neuroses and in schizophrenia, particularly of the paranoid type, it may take months and

even a year before the analysis proper, the moral and psychological constructions, may begin. The neurotic has defended himself against an overwhelming impulse and at the same time he has rebelled in some way against what his own conscience accepted, yet without rejecting the judgment of conscience entirely (ambivalence), and thus in some way he rejects his own conscience, law, God and all authority virtually, as tyrannical and against him (although he may have himself and others convinced of just the opposite). And now the analyst represents this conscience, law, etc., which the neurotic is unable to accept wholly, so that he must be won over to the full trusting and accepting of reason, to the realization that it is truly on his side.

This involves his understanding the essentially rational nature of man, how futile it is to go against it, that what he will discover about himself will be unpleasant (if it had been acceptable to his moral ego he would not have had to block it off), a willingness to assume some responsibility for his condition and not to blame it entirely on circumstances and others, to see that neurotic gains are false (really losses), to see that neurosis is not simply a trial from God as the saints experienced but an impediment to perfection and happiness. He must be helped to see that his unconscious goal can never be reconciled to his conscious moral ego, that he would perhaps rather die than to give up this unconscious goal or the secondary gains of the neurosis, to realize not only that his goal up to now has been irreconcilable with human nature, but that he has enhanced it in his mind, and to see that this is why he is "bored" (which he sometimes interprets as holy indifference) and has no conscious goal. He needs to realize that he must cultivate a normal conscious goal to take its place, to see the fictitious overcompensation for his guilt and inferiority feelings, and, when the overcompensation is stripped off, to face the bankruptcy of his personality, to see that he has been only play-acting, seeking a false utopia which doesn't exist. He cannot believe in the goodness of others because he has lost belief in the goodness in himself.

### **the neurotic's basic despair**

The most critical moment is when he is brought face to face with his basic despair in himself, and he must then be helped to realize that the trouble was there all along; that now he sees it he

can do something about it and is consequently far better off than before—although in his own eyes he appears worse at first because his fictitious picture of himself is destroyed. What may appear to be despair in God is really only despair in himself without God: God hasn't changed, God loves him more tenderly than a mother. He, not God, expected absolute perfection of him. He needs to see that God loves him but not everything he does; that he can, consequently, be loved without being perfect. Thus he ought not to regret the past too much or try to annul it neurotically (by giving himself a new fictitious personality) but to get the good out of everything which has happened or happens. He need not and cannot absolve himself by punishing himself by accidents, scruples, failures, being unhappy when he succeeds, etc., but God can and will absolve him.

The conflict between the instinctual demands and the demands of reason can be resolved in the analytic relationship only by his realizing that God will absolve him and give him the grace to follow reason. His neurotic goal is out of the question and must be renounced; even if it were attainable physically it could never make him happy. When this moral crisis is past, patients will say, "I feel free for the first time in my life," or "Now I'd rather be alive than dead," or "It's relaxing that I don't have to do what I can't do, or don't have to be what I can't be," or "I'm coming alive," or "The world hasn't changed, I have."

### **resistance to authority**

The greatest resistance during the analysis will be to accepting reason in the person of the analyst (authority), for the analyst represents the patient's own reason from which he has rebelled. Here are a few examples of this resistance: demanding an infallible authority before he will accept any authority at all, or finding another authority who differs with the analyst, so that now he does not know which one to follow, and therefore continues to follow himself, which is just what he wanted to do all along. The practical solution of both of these, which belong to the common garden variety of resistance, is for the patient to find the *one* person he can trust more than himself and follow him until he is capable of following his own reason independently. Unless the analyst wins this confidence, the analysis will only succeed partially, if at all.



This rational transference is the biggest hurdle for the patient in the analytic process, for once the union with authority has taken place, and therefore a union with his own conscience from which he broke when the neurotic mechanism developed, there is every chance of success. After a while he will see that his conflict with authority (analyst) is basically a projection of the conflict within himself, between his own reason and his own instinctual drives. Then he begins to realize by his own experience that the exaggerated guilt and fears will disappear in proportion as he admits the degree of guilt for which he was responsible. Now he frequently laughs at himself.

In order to be brought to the point where he will be capable of admitting and releasing the illicit drives, in order to bring them under the control of reason, the neurotic must work consciously on strengthening his will in small ways. Not by making fabulous resolutions which he could not possibly keep, and as he is wont to do, failing again and again and thereby weakening himself, but by making resolutions which he can easily keep and then sticking to them through thick and thin. He must realize that all God expects of him is to do what he can (the "widow's mite"). Often the neurotic only wants to do the things he can't do, and so he must begin, for example, by taking a part-time obscure position instead of daydreaming about being a great missionary, or a great doctor, when in actuality he has had twenty-four jobs in two years. His capacities are often so far ahead of what he will be able to do at first that it will take great humility and fortitude to begin at the bottom. If a certain course of action seems a good idea, he must learn to plunge right in and not wait for a guarantee of success before he will act. He must not make comparisons of himself with others, nor of his circumstances with others', but realize that God has a unique plan for each person. He must also realize that every problem has a solution, that the problem is not that there is no solution, but that he has been unable to accept the solution. The solution may not consist in resolving the problem itself but in taking a different attitude toward it.

### **no magic formula for a cure**

This list could go on indefinitely, but we wanted to give a few concrete indications of the profound re-educative process involved



in a successful psychoanalysis. But we think it is enough to show that any other kind of psychotherapy is relatively superficial and cannot bring about a total alteration in the basic personality structure. No neurotic is entirely neurotic, and unless he works with the conscious part of his personality, the reason, will, and emotions that he *can* do something about (at the same time that he is working on discovering the unconscious factors), he will never be able to tackle the neurosis.

There is no magic formula for a cure; it is a long, zigzag, arduous uphill climb. He must learn to distinguish moral defects from neurotic reactions and not fall back on the fact that he has a neurosis to excuse everything he does. And he must learn what the normal man would do in these circumstances, and what it is prudent for him to do considering his limitations at the moment. At the beginning these are things he cannot judge for himself, and that is why, unless he gives the analyst the role of parent he will be deprived of the very things he needs to get well. All along he has been trying to cure himself, but a genuine clinical neurosis cannot be cured by the patient himself, any more than he can remove his own appendix. The one thing he does not want emotionally is to see the very things he needs to see, and his virtuosity in evading them; the analyst must help him see them.

It is an interesting fact that at the end of an analysis of this kind, the relationship between analyst and patient is one of genuine friendship, not too intimate and yet not impersonal. It seems to be a likeness of the relationship which should exist between parents and grown-up children. (After a certain age parents should treat their children as they would any other adult.) At the beginning of the analysis the patient is independent in a wrong way, and thus he must become dependent of his own free will to be brought up all over again. And at the end he is independent in the right way, and therefore capable of friendship. We would conclude, then, that prudential, not absolute, moral judgments are necessary in the analytic relationship. And, therefore, not to provide this moral guidance would be as wrong as it would be to withhold the understanding of the patient's neurotic mechanism from him.

It is practically impossible for a spiritual director to give this specialized kind of moral instruction and counsel (unless he is a professional psychologist at the same time), because the director as such cannot diagnose what the patient can do something about

and what is pathological. For example, to say to certain persons, "Just forget yourself and your problem. Go out and do things and enjoy yourself," when to forget the problem is just what the neurotic cannot do, and when there is little or no capacity to fight against it, does no good and often is harmful. Expecting him to do what he cannot do seems harsh and only increases his anxiety. Equally pointless is it to say that the practice of mental prayer will remove his neurosis when the neurosis actually is an impediment to mental prayer. Since the emotions are the matter which receive the form of virtue, the virtues cannot be acquired if the emotions are blocked off, inhibited or incapacitated; for example, if the aggressive, that is, the irascible appetite is inhibited, the virtue of fortitude cannot be acquired. To be told that the life of prayer alone will cure him makes the neurotic more discouraged than ever. He has been making efforts and the presumption should be that if he had been normal he would have succeeded. But when he is told by an analyst that his irrational doubts and superstitions, phobic fears, have a cause, and that they are intelligible, he has something to hold on to.

### **limitations of a spiritual director**

To take another example, in psychotherapy it is often necessary to go back over the past to find out what underlies the inversion or the doubts and superstitions, because the unsolved problems of the past are making it impossible for the patient to react normally in the present. Often a confessor might very well discourage or forbid the very thing which is necessary psychologically, and lead the patient to doubt the analytic process by advising him never to think of his past sins again. If the patient goes against a directive of this kind and co-operates with the analytic process, his conscience is disturbed, and if he refuses to go over this material the directive will have unwittingly served the purpose of sabotaging the analysis. (Because of the serious moral matter involved the analysis itself could be an occasion of sin, and this is a further reason why the analyst needs training in moral theology.)

To take another example, in neurosis one often finds delusions of grandeur or what we have called a "fabulous achievement complex" or what Stekel calls a "Christ neurosis" (consciously the neurotic knows that he is not Christ, but in fantasy he plays the

role either actually or virtually), or the kind of scrupulosity in which the patient is trying to prove that he never committed a sin in his entire life. (The same person on some level of his personality is convinced that he is a monster, or that God can save others but not him, or that he has committed the unforgivable sin.) In some cases the two phases alternate, in others one phase seems continually dominant, but the other is latent. But like the two faces on a coin one is never found without the other. The moralist or theologian who did not understand the *dual* nature of the neurotic would very likely work on the phase which was dominant; he would erroneously regard the over-compensation as the pride of a normal man, but neurotic pride is something altogether different. It is not a simple *non serviam*; it is "I would serve if I could, but I can't, and I can't even admit that I can't, and, further, I serve God better than anyone else, but I know that I don't serve Him at all." (Actually he is only trying to convince himself and others of his surpassing excellence because he doubts it so profoundly.) Likewise the moralist would regard the feelings of inferiority and guilt when this phase was dominant as false because they seem to be entirely unfounded.

### scruples

The spiritual director frequently counsels the scrupulous person that when he acts in a state of doubt concerning the moral rectitude of a course of action, that *his* actions are not sinful, that he is an exception to the rule. Now when the neurotic is so plagued by doubts that he would be reduced to complete inactivity by any other directive, he may be given this blanket obedience temporarily, but it is necessary, if a cure is to be effected, to tend away from that rule for normally scrupulous persons just as quickly as circumstances will permit. Since the patient has some use of reason he can begin to follow the rule for normal non-scrupulous persons in this matter and that matter, for the analyst will soon discover that the patient can resolve many of his doubts to certitude. The patient must then be encouraged to recognize this, and to realize that he does not want to lose this blanket permission. He wants to retain it in order to justify committing sin with authoritative approval, and he fabricates doubts to keep things at their present status quo, where he has gained approval for not being responsible for his actions. Originally he could not face the responsibility of certain of his actions, and although the

first doubt was specific to certain matter and came after the fact, it soon spread to everything. The final neurotic triumph is when he receives this blanket permission, but actually it is ineffectual in curing him.

In some way the neurotic knows that he has fooled his authority and consequently he has no respect for him, because at the same time he wants the authority to see through him. The process of the generalization of doubt which evolved with the neurosis has to be gradually retraced, and when he finally discovers and accepts the nature of his impulses, his doubts will all have been resolved. Thus the blanket permission must be gradually removed from this and that matter until by the end of the analysis it is removed entirely.

If, then, spiritual direction merely takes the form of reassurance about doubts, the patient is never convinced. He cannot have confidence in a director whom he can fool, and any directive he receives from him will never bring him any peace. He has to be gently rescued from his own contriving, but it would do no good and be unfair to accuse him of deliberate normal duplicity. Thus to say to a neurotically scrupulous person that he is not guilty at all in any respect just because the matter of the guilt feelings he reports is not serious, indicates an inadequate estimation of the situation. As everyone knows, telling scrupulous persons that they are innocent has never cured them. The truth is that there is some unacknowledged guilt, no longer known consciously, which they are still too afraid to admit.

But the analyst should not simply tell the subject that he is guilty; he should prepare the neurotic to receive this knowledge which, when he is able to accept it, comes as a tremendous relief.

### **"neurosis is a trial from God"**

Here is another example where the spiritual counsel appropriate for a normal person would not apply: in some neurotics criticism against those in authority releases an overt sexual reaction. The neurotic then mentions the criticism to the priest, who naturally interprets it as a scruple and consequently approves of the criticism as both objectively true and as a mature reaction of independent thinking. He thereby unwittingly gives authoritative approval for the associated sexual release (not knowing that it was present), whereas an analyst would suspect its presence and know how to



gain an admission of it from the patient. One more example—a patient may have been brought to realize that his neurosis is an irrational compromise with life, that he has more to gain by giving it up, but he momentarily lacks the courage and will power to renounce it and its apparent pleasures and gains. At this point he may go to a priest, and just at the moment when he needs to have it reaffirmed that the neurosis is an impediment to his development, that it should be given up, and when he needs encouragement to do so, the priest may tell him that a neurosis is a trial from God (so is a diseased appendix, but you have it removed) and thus tempt the neurotic to see it as a good and not an evil. With the charitable motive of encouraging his penitent, the priest could undermine the whole struggle to turn away from the neurotic attachment.

In summary, then, the priest who is not a psychologist will either be too strict with the neurotic by expecting him to comply with the standards for normal people, or too lenient and thereby let him "get away with murder," because he does not recognize that neurotics are past masters at the art of seducing authority, or because he does not see through their bogus scruples and doubts. These are enough examples to show that the spiritual direction of the neurotic differs so radically from the spiritual direction of a normal person that a director who is not thoroughly acquainted with the psychological mechanisms, both in general and in this particular person, cannot help him, so that it would be the merest chance if he did not in fact hinder him in overcoming his neurosis.

### **not eliminating the spiritual director**

We do not mean to give the impression that the analyst's moral guidance takes the place of the priest as the spiritual director. On the contrary the analyst only uses moral direction to bring about mental health and to prepare the patient for spiritual direction from a priest. Nor do we mean to say that the analyst makes the judgment of conscience for the patient, but he leads him to the understanding needed, by making moral constructions from the matter of the case which will enable him to straighten out his own conscience. The analyst, too, must diagnose when the patient is going against his own conscience, and especially where support from the therapist will enable him to follow it, to recognize where he is unable to act in accord with conscience (given his confusion), to



recognize a false sense of guilt, exaggerated guilt, real normal guilt and absence of normal guilt.

The therapist must be able to distinguish between real guilt in the present and the signs of repressed real guilt. There are two signs of repressed real guilt: (1) not to feel guilty when one was guilty and (2) to feel guilty when one was innocent. All analysts recognize the latter (feeling guilty about innocent matter) but not the former (not feeling guilty about remembered illicit acts); at least they never mention it, yet one is never present without the other. And it may be just as pathological *not to feel guilty where one should* as it is to feel guilty when one shouldn't. It is not until the guilty feeling, which is neurotically attached to an innocent act, is reunited to the genuinely guilty act that a cure can take place. Nothing short of a therapy which unites the moral guidance of the theologian with the penetration of a psychologist, then, can be effective. Those who falsely indoctrinate (orthodox Freudians) and thereby release the emotion may be to some extent effective, but they cannot be considered truly successful. For in this case the "adjustment" which takes place is in accord with false and not right reasoning.

Thus today we are faced on the one hand with the non-Catholic Freudians who re-educate according to a false theology, and on the other with psychiatrists who are Catholic who hardly think they should re-educate at all, an attitude which will result—and has already resulted—in a strangulation of the whole process of psychotherapy.

*Paula Stack*

### **Prophecy for Spring**

This is the secret.  
 Listen! I have been told:  
 A psalm lies still within you  
 Soon to break its tomb  
 And claim a resurrected stature.  
 Drown out the atom, love.  
 Hold David's harp and let your fingers move  
 To melodies unknown.

Yield to the violence of greatness, stalwart one.  
 Groan, grow.



Marcellus Azzoni, S.D.B.

## teen-agers' confessions

*Father Azzoni, a Salesian,*

*here summarizes the writings on confession of Don Bosco,*

*a saint famous for his success with teen-age boys.*

"The first essential in the education of boys is to help them make good confessions and good communions."

St. John Bosco often repeated these words, "My dear boys, if you want to persevere in the way of salvation, I recommend three things: first, often receive the sacrament of penance; secondly, receive holy communion frequently (two or three times a week or even daily); thirdly, choose a confessor to whom you can open your heart, and do not change him without a serious reason."

St. John Bosco believed that, in general, children younger than twelve years of age are neither capable of great virtue nor of great evil. He also maintained that after the eighteenth year their moral formation either for better or for worse is practically complete, or at least it is difficult to change the course of moral life. Hence there are six or seven years, precious years, during which priests, teachers,

and parents should work untiringly to help boys and girls to form a true Christian conscience.

Furthermore, he claimed that during his time the education imparted by the public school system was quite pagan in its philosophy and ideas. The great educator of youth and his followers devoted all their energies to counteracting the evil done not only by the schools but also through other pernicious influences. It is safe to say that the entire purpose of the life of St. John Bosco was precisely to form a Christian conscience in modern youth.

Like St. John Bosco, in judging the actual state of the consciences of teen-agers, it is necessary to have an open mind and heart. We cannot always grumble and complain, say that everything is wrong, that there is no hope, that society is going to ruin. The root of the evil must be attacked—sin and the occasions of sin. The human conscience, the will, the mind, and heart must be considered. When these have been explored, then the great remedy must be applied—*gratia Dei*—the grace of God, prayer, confession, holy communion.

### **examination of conscience**

St. John Bosco always exhorted his boys to consider each confession as though it were their last. Before examining their consciences they should implore God's help, then ask light to see their sins clearly, beg the strength to make a sincere confession and the grace to amend their lives.

This is the method he counsels: examination on the Ten Commandments of God, the Six Commandments of the Church, and the particular duties in their state in life. It is more profitable to enlarge upon the examination of conscience by considering the causes and motives of sins, and the effects produced by sins, rather than by adhering closely to a formula found in prayer books. Boys should search deep in their souls to find the root of evil, and not be deceived by self-love. They are to unburden to their father confessor their serious doubts and their spiritual problems. In addition, they are to examine their relations with their neighbor. They are also encouraged to examine their thoughts and sentiments in order to find out their interior sins. Though their hearts may be a mystery, yet with the grace of the Holy Spirit and the help of their confessor they may receive the necessary light.

The examination of conscience should be made in the presence of God. For those who confess weekly or monthly, five or ten minutes ordinarily is sufficient. The examination should include the sins since the last good confession. In case difficulties are experienced, the confessor can be consulted. He should always be able to give the necessary advice.

### **sorrow for sin**

According to St. John Bosco, what is lacking in the confessions of many boys is sorrow and the purpose of amendment. Without true supernatural sorrow there is no forgiveness of sin. Imperfect and perfect contrition should be carefully explained to the young. Imperfect contrition with confession is sufficient for the forgiveness of sin. Perfect contrition, of course, obtains the remission of sin, when for some reason the penitent is unable to confess. The young in particular should be taught that if they commit a mortal sin they can quickly regain the grace of God by means of an act of perfect contrition. Naturally they should have the intention of going to confession as soon as possible.

Before entering the confessional, penitents should recall to mind the passion and death of Christ and the infinite goodness of God. This will render sorrow for sin easy. During the solemn moment when the priest is giving absolution, a devout act of contrition should be renewed. While a sense of guilt can be a help in arousing imperfect contrition, considering the infinite goodness of God is a means toward perfect contrition.

It is to be borne in mind that true sorrow is not a matter of feeling. It is a hatred of sin. This hatred resides in the will and the penitent is determined to sin no more. True sorrow extends to all mortal sins.

Good and fruitful confessions can be judged by the purpose of amendment. Boys and girls who go to confession weekly and always repeat the same sins show clearly that their purpose of amendment is either absent or weak. They should frequently recall to mind their purpose of amendment, as well as the advice given them by their confessor. They should also give an account of their effort to their confessor. Penitent and confessor should work together in earnest. Besides the grace of God, methodical and persevering efforts are required both from the youngsters and the confessor.

Thus will the vacillating wills of the young be strengthened.

Of the requirements for a good confession, the telling of sins is the hardest for many young people. There is the difficulty of explanation. At times there is a lack of confidence in the priest. Fear is often present. There are temptations to keep back certain sins, not to state exactly the number or the nature of sins. Sometimes teen-agers are afraid of being scolded.

Here we see the necessity of cultivating a great spirit of faith. Young people should be helped to see God in their confessor, confident that he is only too happy to be able to absolve them from sin. When any difficulties are present, they should feel free to ask the priest to help them. Whenever they can, they should choose a holy and learned confessor. St. Joseph Cafasso, St. John Bosco's own confessor, would say, "Choose a priest who says Mass well, with real devotion—the love and the devotion that the priest shows for Christ at the altar, he will also show you in the confessional."

### **confession**

As a rule the confession should be brief. In most cases a few minutes is sufficient. The confession should be made with simplicity, sincerity and humility. Questions asked by the priest should be answered truthfully. Advice given should be accepted with docility. It is well to recall here that the penitent owes obedience to his confessor. This obedience must be based on the motive of faith, and should be real and perfect. Should the penitent have difficulty in obeying the priest, he can even mention the matter to him. Perhaps there are misunderstandings that can readily be cleared.

A very important point for teen-agers to remember is that the priest is bound to secrecy and that under no circumstances will he reveal anything heard in confession. Furthermore, the penitent should not speak with others about matters concerning his confessor or confession, even though he is not bound in the same way as is the priest. Advice given by the priest is meant for the penitent and as a matter of prudence it is well not to speak of it.

How often should teen-agers go to confession? St. John Bosco always advised weekly confession and frequent, even daily, holy communion. As a youth, St. John Bosco himself made this resolution, "I will go to confession every week and I will earnestly try



to put into practice the resolutions I make in each confession."

The advice given by the confessor can be considered as a kind of spiritual direction. Nevertheless, it is well that from time to time the penitent discuss with his confessor the important affairs of his soul. This is true especially when there is question of choosing a state of life or conduct regarding any particular moral or spiritual problem.

Spiritual direction, according to St. John Bosco, should aim at establishing in souls the kingdom of God and His justice and by means of prayer it should lead to the practice of all Christian virtues.

When sin is not involved, teen-agers may consult any qualified person, especially when they feel the need to ask advice about what concerns their daily life. Teachers, but especially priests, should always try to be ready and capable of imparting light and wise counsels to the young.

### **penance**

After having received absolution the proper thing to do is to make a short but fervent act of thanksgiving. Thanks are due to our Blessed Savior for His forgiveness, to our Blessed Mother and our Guardian Angel for their assistance. A short prayer for the confessor is advisable.

As soon as possible the penance should be performed, especially when this is a question of reciting a few prayers. It is good sometimes for the confessor to impose a penance that can help youngsters correct and overcome their faults.

Besides the penance the priest gives, the penitent does well to add something of his own, for example, the practice of some external mortification, spiritual reading, the Stations of the Cross, almsgiving to the poor or some other good cause, acts of humility and the willing acceptance of the daily cross.

This in brief is a summary of St. John Bosco's teaching for youth regarding the sacrament of penance. During his lifetime St. John Bosco met with marvelous success. He directed thousands of boys on the path of Christian perfection among whom was St. Dominic Savio, who reached the highest goal of holiness in the space of three years spent at St. John Bosco's school.

Numerous are the benefits that can be obtained from the proper use of the sacrament of penance. Chief among these are:

1. Mortal sin is forgiven; the soul is saved from hell and the gates of heaven are open to it.
  2. Confession is a powerful remedy in breaking bad habits.
  3. Spiritual enemies are fought and combatted—the devil, the world, the flesh. Hence purity of heart is preserved.
  4. Venial sins are forgiven and the soul is constantly purified from daily venial faults.
  5. Temporal punishment is diminished; thereby the soul is prepared for a speedy entrance into heaven.
  6. Lost merits are restored to the soul in proportion to the intensity of its penitence and to the fervor of its charity.
  7. Sanctifying grace is either restored or increased.
  8. The virtue of humility is strengthened.
  9. Faith, hope, and charity are intensified.
  10. The mind becomes enlightened.
  11. True peace and spiritual joy are given the soul.
  12. Good confessions prepare the soul for a holy and happy death.
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*Anna Barbara Britz*

**Beautiful Is a Tree**

Beautiful  
 is a tree growing,  
 budding,  
 blowing,  
 against a red brick wall,  
 Acquiring perfection  
 in the amber afterglow  
 of an April afternoon,  
 Sustaining Beauty  
 from an Eternal  
 Somewhere  
 So that one is  
 aware  
 that before the tree was  
 or the red brick wall  
 or the golden sunlight,  
 a Voice spoke  
 in the darkness,  
 I AM.

Elizabeth R. Isely

## a child goes to confession

*Why, for no apparent reason, are so many people  
afraid of going to confession?*

*Can it be that somehow in childhood they got  
the feeling that confession is an object of terror  
rather than a means of grace and love?*

*Mrs. Isely discusses the pitfalls parents face in  
helping to form the child's attitude toward confession.*

The parents of a small child, headed to his first confession and communion, have their share, certainly, in the joyful, exterior preparations, ironing the white ruffles and currying the small blue suit. The busy and genial scene is the externalization of the growth of the child, and the white ribbons and arm bands mark the age when the innocence of ignorance gives place to the new but genuine innocence of knowledge. The small bedecked one is deposited at church by parents forever uncertain of what effect their own attitudes are having on his spiritual nature.

How can we regard sin in a child? Should a child go to confession at all when he is scarcely old enough to count the change from ten cents' worth of bubble gum? Answers in the negative are

many, and the affirmative reasons—personal love of Christ and the delicate spiritualizing of self-respect which exists in children—are fragile and elusive. Indeed there is an incongruity between our idea of children and the questions which are raised to us from the four-foot level by the seven-to-ten-year-olds who, in their generosity, think us wise.

### **terror and damnation**

Motives of conduct which are appropriate and cogent to an adult are not necessarily either when offered to a child. In this country, fortunately receding as a religious influence, is the untimely fear of hell. Once, certainly, the shadow of inevitable damnation lay across religious thinking, and out of this initial Puritanism reasonable and kind people escaped at last into Unitarianism, Universalism, and simple no-faith. What was once a national childhood suffering is still repeated however on an individual scale. While the abstract background of the Calvinistic fear of hell and of our own Catholic fear are contradictory—no pardon *versus* contrition and absolution—yet in operation the systems of terror are not unlike. Since even the rigid Nathanael Emmons could not coax a mortal sin out of a child's doings, the untoward act therefore became a simple index to the nature of the soul. A boy who repeatedly struck his sister—richly as she might deserve it—was walking in the dreary footsteps of Cain. Repetition of an offense was sufficient grounds for despair none the less real because the transgressor was young. The serious child of our times who confesses week by week the same faults and is told at home, "You really don't want to do better," can also become convinced that his efforts are unavailing, his sincerity doubtful, and absolution therefore invalid. The result is a small but desperate haunter of the confessional, swiping cookies with misgivings, smarting over the lies he has told but telling them anyhow, terrified at night, and working toward lifelong scruples or emotional depletion.

A classic statement of infant despair is a description of Horace Mann's terrible childhood: "He became familiar with every nook and cranny of the lurid theological system. . . . Such a faith spread a pall of blackness over his whole being and shut out every beautiful and glorious thing. Beyond that curtain of darkness, he could see the bottomless and seething lake filled with flames and hear the



wailings and agony of its victims. . . . No penance, no sacrifice, no agony could avert his fate. . . . Thus would he weep and sob till nature found repose in utter exhaustion." As a point of interest did these influences make Horace a good boy? "Nor did these terrors ever prompt him to a good action or deter him from a bad one."

For the parent, the opposite attitude, that of levity and presumption, is difficult to avoid for a litany of reasons in the time and in ourselves. We know that in the hinterland of damnation there is no place for the stolen peanuts and the note flipped across the classroom with the legend, "Sister is a jerk." The act is small, often ridiculous, and seems less a matter for qualms than for laughter. We see children playing in the sunlight with pebbles and flowers, and we take the pictorial for the comprehensive, and imagine that sin and grief pass them by. Our desires are one with the bright impression; we would so much like sin and grief to pass them by now and always. We romanticize them from the perspective of our adult stature. We see griefs that are negligible in the presence of ours, sins that are innocent in the presence of our own. We are fortunate if we do not mix with our feelings a certain pride and self-congratulation, while we ask in the formula attributed to Byron, "Who is greater or more miserable than I?" We are tempted to consider a child something relative to the absolute of our own feelings. We are only too aware that we are human, subject to fatigue, error, guilt, and impatience. We lose sight of the fact that it is equally serious being a child.

### **a small jungle life**

The sunny and pictorial moment of innocence is, unfortunately, only one gleam from the prism. The child's talent, experience, and opportunity for sin are not equal to ours. We see dully, and do not bother to weigh his intention. Around our knees struggles a small jungle life. There is hurt intended to hurt, theft intended to rob, and lies intended to deceive. There is bad will in the torn-up spelling book and grief in the bravado which discounts it. Through the mists which separate us from our own childhood, we remember a serene and pleasant country. The outlines of a church are faintly perceptible; the accurate faces of the gargoyles are lost in distance,

and the actual past is covered over by our wishes for what might have been.

Children are small but in their perplexities they are neither funny nor cute. Only our sense of humor amok is funny and cute. Amusement is not a quality of the situation, it is personal with ourselves. In addition, some of the laughter which children's questions provoke is uneasy, and less reflects humor or joyfulness than the embarrassment which exists between generations. But laughter, when an escape for the parent, is all too often an affront to the child. The embarrassment is best met head on, with all sincerity. This is difficult, for we know only too well our doubt and failure, and we search for some infallible formula which, whether or not we hold it seriously ourselves, will give assurance to the child. We sympathize with the subway posters which urge parents to give a child a faith to live by—whether it is spinal with the parent or not. We search for a magic answer, and we discount the need for agreement between what we tell the child and what we feel in our own mind.

Strictly from poverty, children have been informed that their sins will make the Blessed Virgin cry—which they won't—or forfeit the ball game against St. Joseph's. This is all very well intended, and very much in the spirit of the times. Daily we scan editorials urging America to be religious, not because religion seems essentially true, but because somehow we may thereby frustrate Soviet Russia. This won't do. We dislike the huckstering to which we are hourly exposed; we invoke the national government to make advertising true. But irritabilities similar to our own are facing us out of the large candid eyes of childhood. No matter how well intentioned, blatant falsehoods are futile. We may fear to strain children's intelligence by a straight statement of fact. But even if we do, no great harm is done. Put the baby on the floor before the psychological moment; he will walk by and by.

### **the protection of formalism**

Aware of the difficulties in communication, an adult, perhaps not unwisely, meets the reserve of a child with his own. This is the easier to do as the emotional climate of the time is one of reserve, particularly on religious subjects. Feelings which would do credit to Little Eva are withheld from relatives and friends; we

convince ourselves finally that our armor plating conceals the perfect vacuum. However, the most reserved adult is sometimes approached with the direct question. An uneasy parent looking for the right answer sometimes finds it in an accepted formula. The child is carefully drilled in the minutiae of the confessional and his accuracy is made the measure of his obligation. The sign of the cross is elaborated on entering and leaving; the act of contrition is word perfect; the small one vows to amend his life amen. If there were a compass in church, we might even face him toward the east! Such formalism is superior to terror or falsity. But formality has everything except life; though the uncanny instinct of children can often make up for this lack.

A parent, accustomed to genuflect before experts in all other matters, may gladly delegate the responsibility of preparing his child for confession. Alas, however, the expert is sometimes as exterior and formal as the parent, with the result that the week's intentional misdeeds are in advance relegated to Saturday's resplendent, ritualistic confession.

However, the forces aligned with us are stronger than we may think. The codes and responsibilities which a seven-year-old accepts of his own volition are staggering. There is docility toward accepted customs; the binding force of counting games is older than Hammurabi. Certain acts are vigorously repudiated; one may not tattle to an adult or lie to other children. Reliability is expected; we have all encountered the enraged protest, "But you *said* you would." A seven-year-old is ready for membership in a group, and the more exacting the group the stronger the appeal usually is.

What exists strongly and fragmentarily as a part of a child's self-respect, can exist even more strongly in the unity of a religious explanation. The good actions on which he prides himself are doubly good because they are in accord with divine law; conversely, acts which are in themselves wrong, and which already distress their young perpetrator, have a wrongness independent of being found out. This is simply pointing out to the child the floor on which he stands. Of course, the danger in such a method is obvious. It exists in the parent, not the child. Instead of applying religious motives to acts which are in themselves good or bad, it is too easy to make convenience and inconvenience our criteria. Impatient and hurried as we all are, we may find ourselves enforcing an unpalatable breakfast food by invoking the Holy Ghost.

### **a personal love of Christ**

Without religious feeling the concept of God's right to legislate is bleak, and the need for personal devotion to Christ as mediator is keen. In the love of Christ is the mainspring of religious emotion, and nothing in the emphasis on Jesus as Person infringes on what we know to be true, or makes our desires or convenience the measure of a child's devotion.

Christ's personality is, however, often the focus of our own uneasiness and misunderstanding. The religious feelings we guard most cautiously are those concerning our own personal attitude toward the historical Jesus in His intelligence, fortitude, responsibility, truth, courtesy. In our perplexity we lose track of a similar perplexity in our children. We have only to attend children's Masses to hear the qualities we admire translated into bookishness, dullness, officiousness, tale bearing, and etiquette. Time, which plays tricks with words, has so mishandled meekness that it should never be mentioned in church. It is a tribute to the seriousness and good intentions of children that they do not once and for all time write off the Lord as nauseous when He was young and, when adult, implacably aligned with other adults. This is not the Christ of the evangelists, who has gotten lost in the retelling.

The Christ of the gospel narratives has the qualities to command admiration and, as He lives now and always, to command it as Person and not as memory. Thus He is the subject of a relationship with the child, and eligible for the respect and loyalty and love of which children are capable. His personality vitalizes the concepts of offense, contrition, forgiveness, reparation. There is an appeal to honor and generosity in the idea of honor and generosity greater than their own. Contrition takes its rightful place in a relationship with the unseen.

This relationship is primary between the child and God. Our part in it is defined by caution and respect. It is one of indirection. We may be a circumstance, even a catalyst, but an intermediary never. Once we have offered the idea of God as Being, to be loved and served without deviation, and of Christ as Person, invisible but real, we have asserted our function. The reserve which we claim for ourselves we must extend.

The workings of grace are not our jurisdiction. They are between God and a child.





Marion Mitchell Stancioff

## communion of guilt

*Apart from the guilt we bear for our own sins  
and the neurotic guilt that may pursue us,  
there is a guilt we all share for the sins  
of the whole world.*

The depth-psychologists are quite right. Religion is at the bottom of this guilt trouble. Where there is no *religio* there can be no *negligio*. Where there is no law there can be no crime.

They forget however that there always has been a law, and in man an awareness of law. There was law even before there was death, in Paradise. There is a law of sorts in Papua even, and in farthest Patagonia. The higher the law the harder it is to keep. The rituals of primitive religions gave men the satisfaction of identifying themselves with physical law—with the processes of nature, the rhythm of the seasons, the laws of fecundity. The mysteries of classical religion gave their initiates the exaltation of starting life anew, beyond this everyday order, under a higher spiritual law. The ancient Jews felt no contradiction between matter and spirit, nature and the soul. The creation was one and it was good. But man hav-

ing fallen away from God-likeness the law had become too difficult to keep. That is why St. Paul tells us that the Law of Sinai spelled death until the sacrifice of Calvary.

Christ brought to His chosen people, stooping under their burden of law, the means to be free from guilt. The good tidings of the Gospel were just this: that God does not desire the death of the sinner, that he has taken man's guilt upon Himself and died for it so man may live. And he has left us in the sacrament of penance a unique provision to deliver us from the deadly weight of guilt.

### **solidarity in misery**

The Communion of Saints is the pivot of God's scheme. This conception of spiritual kinship and solidarity has become rooted in Western consciousness and cannot be eradicated now. The recession of Christianity in recent centuries has not left a blank in our dechristianized sensibility. It has left in us a *dis-ease* which it is not excessive to call the communion of sinners. This negative communion, this solidarity not in sanctity but in misery, multiplies the burden of each, just as the positive communion lightens the yoke of each.

This recent humanistic union is based on *compassion*. But compassion without God inevitably breeds the sense of guilt. When we reject—or neglect—the idea of God we necessarily make ourselves responsible for everything. All that's wrong with the world is henceforth man's fault. The existentialist philosopher who said that "mankind cannot be happy while there is a single stray dog in the world," voiced what all the godless romantics have felt for the last hundred years. But it is not only the godless who feel the terrible weight of world-guilt crushing them down. Years ago Berdyaev—who was a rather typical tormented Christian of our times—said: "Everyone of us is responsible, *I* am responsible, for the agony of the Russian Revolution." And most sensitive people these days, Christians included, feel much the same.

This heightened consciousness of evil and cruelty and of individual responsibility for social ills is the inverted form of the old collective responsibility we find in the Bible. There only a part sinned and all were punished. Here we all feel sinful and only part are punished. We all—that is all "the articulate" and the "intellectual"—accuse ourselves of collective crime. But we reject collective punishment. We are so obsessed with the pains of others—at least

the outward and physical ones—we can hardly settle down to sleep for sorrow. Like Karamazov we are haunted by the faces of the suffering, pursued by the faces of the poor. But we are haunted on such a scale, by so many faces, that their features blur together and we are confronted whichever way we look by a featureless mask of pain. And as it is the face of no one we can do nothing for it. We have generalized our crime, and so our guilt has become general, and therefore impossible ever to shake off. If we can neither pin it down nor make amends for it, nor confess it and be forgiven, we shall be saddled with it for the rest of our lives.

It is in this saddle that Satan rides so many souls into the madhouse. The generalization of sin weighs us down and makes us desperate. We feel our impotence to correct such giant evils, to relieve such endless anonymous pain. We find our only proud relief in flagellating ourselves with the consciousness of our personal part in this tragedy of guilt. If I know that there are in the world two hundred million hungry people, the number of meals I could afford to give them would seem such a silly pittance that I end up not giving even one poor person a square meal. Statistics have joined hands with pity to paralyze our courage and drive us to despair. And despair has always been one of the devil's most perfect instruments.

### **the cure for the world's guilt**

Some, like Nietzsche, have seen that too much compassion was breeding despair. So they have tried to escape by hardening themselves, by placing themselves "beyond good and evil." They simply add active to passive guilt. For when we reject good we reject its Author, Who alone can "wash our sins whiter than wool"; and when we refuse to recognize evil we refuse the possibility of mercy, and so fall into a double despair.

The cure for such deep trouble and one so widely spread cannot be simple. To those who suffer from it this sense of guilt for the pain-of-the-world is a constant and intimate agony. It is very difficult to persuade them that a cure exists. They hug their pain to their heart. When the ancient thoughts of the Church are proposed to them they turn away with a bitter smile, sure that she cannot be aware of a psychological problem so specifically modern. But if they will really try her methods with patient care and a will that is truly good, they shall with time be whole again.

First of all, we cannot be cured without humility.

At an eleventh century council Urban VI ordered all the faithful to wear ashes on Ash Wednesday like public penitents expiating their sins. He wished to remind all Christians that none are guiltless. Throughout the lenten liturgy we deplore our crimes, admit our guilt, pray for an increase of compunction. Yet "we who know we are dust and for the penalty of our guilt must return to dust" cry out on "that Friday we call good" that the first sin of all was "a blessed fault," since it brought God into our tangible world.

Ours is a long drama of guilt which Christ resolves in endless joy. To be sharers in the joy we must be conscious of the guilt. Not in a false sentimental way, but with a clear and honest awareness that no man is without fault before God. The sense of guilt must grow into perception of our imperfections, into recognition of the debt we owe, and into the desire to make it good at least in a small way. Such a recognition of guilt is proper in the Christian and does not, like the romantic or the modern guilt feeling, generate oppression but, on the contrary, relieves him of its weight.

If we are humble enough, we realize that we are powerless to achieve justice as a whole. But we can and must fight for it unrelentingly in our own area of action. It is pride that makes us imagine ourselves responsible for the pain of the whole world. Our justice, even though it be greater than that of the scribes and pharisees, cannot solve the problem of pain. That is God's answerability; and He answers out of the heart of the whirlwind and we cannot understand. Our part is to help as many suffering people as we can by humblest charity. But we need more than humility to cure us.

### **the need to believe**

We cannot of course be cured without faith.

We need to believe in God, and also in His power to do and to undo. If there is no one with power to forgive, how shall we ever be rid of our guilt? The hardest penance would be pointless. We need, too, to believe that we were created in God's image and that it has been defaced. We need this faith to understand and overcome the inborn burden always dragging at us. We need to believe theology when it explains that this weight is not our personal disease but is common to all men. We need to believe that the sacrifice of Jesus has put freedom within the reach of all. We need to be-



lieve the Church when she pronounces on faith and morals. If there is no definition of sin there can be no satisfaction for it and consequently no mercy. We must believe that we are not fitted to be the ultimate judges of our own delinquency; and that God can judge our guilt better than we. And that those to whom He has delegated the power to sit in judgment over us, "the power to loose and the power to bind," can dispense or withhold His mercy. That often they can distinguish as we cannot, between scrupulosity and sin, between lack of sentiment and lack of love, between aridity and loss of faith.

Yet we need more than faith to cure us. We cannot be cured without love. We have got into the habit of thinking that because we feel sorry for a man we love him. Actually we only feel terribly uncomfortable at being physically comfortable ourselves when others are not. And we tend too to mistake for love of mankind the ache of our own loneliness in a crowd. This is the typical loneliness of the humanist era. Humanism isolates each man because it removes the central magnetic pole—God—which draws men together. When this goes they are alone, or else for a moment bound into a mob by a passing passion. Since there is no central pivot they soon fall apart again into their loneliness, ever nursing regret for the past moment of spurious cohesion. True love of man can only come through love of God. Only in God is our love of man saved from being mere pity or merely fellowship.

Furthermore our sense of guilt is very much due to our *unlove*, of man and of God. Without knowing it we feel terribly guilty of withholding what we were born to give. When we do not love God we necessarily hate ourselves, since we are images of Him. We are devoured with hatred of ourselves for being only so very little like Him; and with hatred for the darkness we have chosen in which we still cannot totally lose ourselves because of that haunting obstinate God-likeness which we call love.

### **love carrying the load**

Love is the cure but we need more than love to cure us.

We cannot be cured without pain. Action is the proof of love. When we love we want to help the other carry his load. We do not, like the humanitarians, imagine that all loads can be abolished. We know that some loads are inevitable and necessary and even benefi-

cent. And if we love we want to take our turn in helping. To accept the burden of pain for the love of God and man washes the feeling of guilt away and delivers the spirit from the oppression of the ages. That is why wise people put up with pain peacefully and why holy people rejoice in it. The saint is a realist who loves others so much that he welcomes his own pain as a means of sharing their burden of sin and its right retribution. The materialist is a dreamer who does not see sin, and who fears pain so much that he seeks anaesthesia rather than life for himself and others. Christ, Who was without sin, took upon Himself the pain due the crimes of others. So should we, the guilty, by loving acceptance of crosses—whether habitual and insignificant or exceptional and mighty—take our share in the burden of sin. Our own sins and those also of the unwitting and of the wilful sinners.

By trying to accept pain lovingly, by penance and by mortification, and chiefly by prayer we can help lighten the burden of legitimate guilt. The Prophet Joel tells us "there is no turning to God without penance"; for, although we beseech Him "remember not our iniquities," yet "my sin is ever before my eyes," and that reminder of our guilt is also a part of His mercy. For without the penance which is our satisfaction for sin we can hardly be saved.

Yet it is prayer, that unique understanding with God, which best helps us clear our guilt. Those who do not pray, and they are the majority, even of self-styled Christians, are corroded with hidden guilt. They do not recognize it for what it is: the weight of worship withheld, of praise diverted from its proper end, nor know they are sucked dry by the anxiety of debt. They do not know that honor refused where honor is due dishonors the self.

### **most of all we need hope**

Yet neither penance, nor mortification, neither pain lovingly accepted nor faithfully persevering prayer, are by themselves enough to cure the guilt pains of our society. We need as well the foundation of humility, the virtues of faith and charity. Perhaps most of all do we need hope. Not only is hope neglected, but it is so utterly ignored by our poor world that we sin against it and do not even know that it is a virtue to be won and not just a state of mind to be enjoyed.

With hope in the Communion of Saints, hope in the sacraments

of the Church, hope in the sacrifice of Christ, hope in the mercy of Almighty God, and hope finally in the beatific vision, we shall be able to bear the agony of the world while we remain in it. With hope we shall not be tempted to generalize our guilt but will have strength to pick up our own cross and carry it to our own Calvary. Only thus shall we achieve that peace which is the requisite condition of a fruitful inner life and which we have been promised, and which passes our small and troubled understanding.

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## book reviews

### THE DOCTOR LOOKS AT THE SOUL

by Victor E. Frankl, M.D., Alfred A. Knopf, \$4.00

"The gas chambers of Auschwitz," said Dr. Victor E. Frankl during his one memorable lecture in New York in October 1954, "were the ultimate consequences of the theory that man is nothing but the product of heredity and environment—or as the Nazi liked to say, of 'Blood and Soil.' I am absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Maidenek were ultimately prepared not in some ministry or other in Berlin but rather at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers."

Dr. Frankl's message was that man can never be reduced to a "nothing but," whether that "nothing but" be a "mass of reflexes" or "heredity and environment." Man's existence, he pointed out, is characterized by three things: his spirituality, his freedom, and his responsibility.

This was the first time that many New Yorkers had been privileged to hear the teaching of the "new voice" from Vienna, and it was truly a new voice, that made the older voice from Vienna—that of Freud—sound very old indeed.

Dr. Frankl speaks as a man of his time to contemporary man. He considers the pathologic spirit of our time characterized by four symptoms: the fatalist view of life, a planless attitude toward life, collective thinking, and fanaticism. He feels these four symptoms betoken contemporary man's desire to flee from responsibility and freedom. The author quotes a statement once made by Freud in conversation: "Humanity has always known that it possesses a spirit; it was my task to show that it has instincts as well." Frankl adds: "But I myself feel that humanity has demonstrated *ad nauseam* in recent years that it has instincts, drives. Today it appears more important to remind man that he has spirit, that he is a spiritual being."

In the present book Dr. Frankl develops the theory and treatment of neuroses and psychoses following the great insights offered by the existentialist themes of Kierkegaard, Jaspers, and to some extent Heidegger. These themes in a general way revolve around four concepts: the essential uniqueness of each individual, the freedom of each individual, the responsibility of committing that freedom to some freely chosen end, the concrete situation of the individual in the predicament of his time. There is no doubt that such themes have intense relevance



for our time, and that "existentialist analysis" as developed by Frankl at the University of Vienna is an enormous contribution to the psychotherapy of our time.

*The Doctor and the Soul*, the first of Frankl's long list of books to appear in English, was published in Vienna under the title of *Artzliche Seelsorge*. Frankl himself is a man acquainted with suffering and the total crisis of our time, since he spent the war years in the concentration camp of Auschwitz and the post-war years in denuded, occupied Europe. Thus his work possesses a very topical quality, a quality of immediacy and actuality. The present book, like *Homo Patiens*, not yet translated, is of great significance for the appalled, searching man of today.

In unusually simple terms (with few exceptions) Frankl traces his main ideas. The human being has an innate desire to have as much meaning in his life as possible—this desire he terms the will-to-meaning. When this will-to-meaning is frustrated, as it so often is in our disordered world, there results a neurosis—termed an existential neurosis. The psychotherapy indicated in such a case must take into account man's total nature, especially his spiritual nature. A psychotherapy that does not include the whole nature of man can be nihilistic in its effects, he points out. Many of us can testify to this in cases with which we have come in contact. Frankl has coined the term "logotherapy" to denote this type of psychotherapy which recognizes man's spirit and starts from that point of recognition. Its end is the leading of the individual into full responsibility and the acceptance of a task in life consonant with his own uniqueness as a being. He further describes it as "psychotherapy in terms of the mind." Logotherapy intends not to supplant but to supplement other types of psychotherapy.

On the subject of religion Frankl speaks from his own clinical experience when he tells us that repressed religion may lead to an obsessional neurosis—in contrast to this Freudian view that religion is an obsessional neurosis. He found that many of his patients had no hesitancy in revealing any and all details or fantasies of their sex life, but revealed their religious yearning only with shamefacedness, or after a dream had indicated a repression of that yearning.

While Frankl does not specifically say so, his concept of man harmonizes with the view inherent in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. From his experience he has noted that man finds a spiritual anchor in religion. One of the side effects of logotherapy and existential analysis is that "in certain felicitous cases, the patient regains his capacity for faith." What faith this may be is not the concern of the therapist. The practitioner of logotherapy or existential analysis finds that with people lacking a religious anchor, with people whose will-to-meaning is frustrated, who may be bent on self-destruction, or moving toward despair, he must

"exploit the potentialities of medicine to the utmost." The patient literally thrusts his spiritual conflicts on the therapist, and the therapist answers with medical ministry, a "borderland between medicine and philosophy." This is no pre-emption of the function of priestly ministry, but an acceptance by the doctor of the new responsibility that troubled man has presented to him.

One of the most rewarding and challenging sections in *The Doctor Looks at the Soul* is that entitled "On the Meaning of Life." It is written, as is the rest of the book, from the vantage point of professional competence, and its examples arise chiefly from clinical practice. In life, Frankl classifies three types of values: creative, which are realized in activity by the artistic or gifted personality; experiential, realizable by the most ordinary person in his receptivity to what is meaningful or beautiful in the life around him even without activity on his part; and finally, attitudinal values. These last values are best described in Frankl's own terms: "Thus an apparently impoverished existence—one which is poor in creative and experiential values—still offers a last, and in fact, the greatest opportunity for the realization of values. These values are what we call attitudinal values. What is significant is the person's attitude toward an unalterable fate. The opportunity to realize such attitudinal values is therefore present wherever a person finds himself confronted by a destiny toward which he can only act by acceptance. The way in which he accepts, the way in which he bears his cross, what courage he manifests in suffering, what dignity he displays in doom and disaster, is the measure of his human fulfilment."

Thus Frankl comes to the very bedrock of existential thinking, the limitless significance of "being." By just being, and by using one's freedom to take a courageous attitude toward an irrevocable fate—approaching death, long inactivity, fatal disease—one is showing forth the highest possible value—the immeasurable value of existence itself—existence not propped up by status, vocation, work, achievement, role-playing, cause-serving. If for nothing else but the glorification of being as such, this must be classed as a profoundly important work. Such a work might well be utilized by priests, doctors, social workers and all those who must deal with the great number of persons who, humanly or materially speaking, have no reason to go on living.

While Freud was concerned with what is unfree in man—his id and so-called ego drives—and even propounded that the belief in psychic freedom and volition must surrender to the claims "of a determinism that controls even the psychic life," Frankl searches out whatever is free in the personality, even the most residual vestige of freedom. He points out that destiny, or fate, limits our freedom since we are born with a "biological fate" in our natural disposition and endow-

ments, and a "sociological fate," in the sum total of our environment. What is unfree in our psyche forms our psychological fate. But no matter how fated a person is, there is the possibility of a free choice in the position the person takes on his fate. In severe neurosis, or even in psychosis, there exists some area of freedom that may be grasped so as to move the whole personality toward a greater degree of health or integration. "We must accept our destiny," states the author, "as we accept the ground on which we stand—a ground which is the spring-board for our freedom."

The book exhibits a balanced attitude toward the psychoanalytic system of Freud, as well as to the contributions of individual psychology. Frankl quotes the apt view of a colleague on Freud, namely that the "dwarf standing upon the shoulders of a giant can see farther than the giant himself." However, he does not fail to clarify the dangers of a therapy based on a too-limited view of man's nature. "If we derive the ego from the id," he points out, "and the super-ego from the id plus the ego, what we achieve is not a correct picture of man but a caricature." Man's will, his freedom, being irreducible, do not derive from anything. The Freudian theory of the pleasure principle, says Frankl, "overlooks the directly purposive character of all psychic activity." Another effect of this theory is "the levelling of all potential human aims" and the resultant devaluation of man.

In two longer sections entitled "General Existential Analysis" and "Special Existential Analysis," Frankl shows how his concept of man indicates a therapeutic method differing from traditional psychoanalysis. As existentialist and therapist, he stresses the uniqueness of each man's existence and the responsibility accruing to each man therefrom. Cases arise in existential analysis where the patient must be aided so as to be capable of suffering. Psychoanalysis aims to help patients to be capable of pleasure, or of doing. It is Frankl's opinion as a medical practitioner that every neurotic or psychotic symptom has a physical basis or component, even if this cannot be localized or diagnosed.

To this reader, one of the strongest sections of the book is that dealing with love. It is not possible to give a resume of the frank and magnificent section of fifty pages devoted to the various aspects of love between human beings. He points out that much neurotic sexual anxiety in our culture stems from the generally held but erroneous ideas that sexual abstinence is harmful and that the ungratified sex instinct—rather than the repression of that instinct—leads to neurosis. The weakest part of the book consists of the forty pages devoted to anxiety and obsessional neurosis, melancholia, and schizophrenia. Perhaps the experience with psychotics did not permit of more than a sketchy treatment at the time of writing. Too many of the case histories in this

section seem too pat or actually shallow. Often the examples merely relate the moment of liberating insight and seem to indicate cures that partake of the marvelous.

Despite this section the book stands as a serious and challenging contribution. It has a ringing tone of reality for contemporary man. Perhaps in a generation or so it may have a more dated sound, since psychotherapeutic theory, like theology, must take into consideration the changing face of the total crisis that holds the world in its grip. However, existentialist analysis, the latest theory from Vienna, does not claim the same definitiveness that orthodox Freudianism does—a system announced by an Old Testament prophet which shows all too well the effects of original sin in tampering with the springs of human nature at their source, but has no vision of redemption. In such a system man is caught in a great almost airless prison, and inside the greater prison finds himself further imprisoned by a cage whose bars are the drives and mechanisms that determine his psyche.

Existential analysis stands in the open with the currents of our time blowing freely around it. As Dr. Frankl presents it, it is a contribution of inestimable value in the understanding of man today, man suffering, man tormented, man loving, man seeking meaning, man imprisoned by fate or by his fellows, but still free because he is man.

*Jerem O'Sullivan-Barra*

### **THE EUCHARIST AND THE CONFESSIONAL**

by F. D. Joret, O.P., Newman, \$3.50

This book should be of great interest especially to those Catholics who receive the sacraments quite frequently, and whose familiarity with confession and communion have perhaps caused them to lose some of the reverence and intensity of love with which they would otherwise view these sacraments.

Father Joret first discusses the nature of the sacraments in themselves, then turns to the holy eucharist, recounts its fruits, writes on the practice of frequent communion with suggestions for suitable preparation and thanksgiving, and then goes on to discuss the sacrament of penance. He studies the function of the sacrament of penance in relation to mortal sin ("After a spiritual shipwreck, it is penance which enables us to escape death.") and in a succeeding chapter, in relation to the remission of venial sin. He gives a useful reminder that there are other means than confession which the Christian may and should use for the remission of his venial sins. These means "were the only ones employed during the early centuries of the Church. Christians



only received sacramental absolution for grave sins. However, under monastic influence, there grew up the custom of confessing venial sins also, and of doing so periodically. It is an excellent means of sanctification which the Church increasingly recommends, and which should be used as far as possible." But there are "other means of purification which, for many persons, are the only ones to which they can frequently resort." When we make acts of charity, accompanied by regret for our venial sins, these are blotted out. Therefore, "everything that is capable of exciting the fervor of charity can assist in bringing about the remission of venial sins." This would include, of course, all the seven sacraments, but the eucharist most of all because it contains Our Lord in person and presents us with the best motive for loving God.

Father Joret then discusses the part sacramentals play as a means toward the remission of venial sins, and certain prayers such as the *Our Father* and the *Confiteor*. But he reiterates, "The great remedy for venial sin is communion, and frequent communion. And so it is a great mistake for people who have only venial sins on their conscience to abstain from communion because they cannot receive the sacrament of penance, and they are doing harm to their souls."

The author then discusses confession in its relation to spiritual direction, and gives a method of examination of conscience for those who confess frequently and complain that they have "nothing to confess." He remarks that from different persons "the Holy Spirit demands more or less according to their individual capacities: we must bear this thought in mind to make us kind in our judgment of others, and severe in our own self-examination. From the same person the Holy Spirit demands today what he formerly could not have understood or have borne; therefore let us not waste our time in worrying over a more or less remote past, but let us be wide awake to realize fully what God wants of us at this present time."

Altogether this is an admirable book, giving as it does an increased understanding of the sacraments which could certainly render their reception more fruitful.

—*Dorothy Dohen*

## BOOK NOTES

*Helps and Hindrances to Perfection* by Thomas J. Higgins, S.J. (Bruce, \$4.50) describes itself as highlighting "the most effective aids and most crippling obstacles along the road to perfection," and this it does, although in a rather pedestrian way, and with, to my mind, over-lavish use of quotations from other authors. This gives the book somewhat of the flavor of an anthology which was not, I am sure, Father Higgins' intention.—P. McG.

In *When You Pray* (Newman, \$3.50) Richard Klafer, O.S.C. analyzes the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, giving the theological background for each. A well-documented book, it should be useful as a reference volume and as a source of sermon material. A brief treatment of the Hail Mary, also handled phrase by phrase, is included as well.—P. McG.

Three recently published theological works will be of interest to priests, seminarians, and lay students of theology. *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* by Dr. Ludwig Ott (B. Herder, \$7.50) is a basic textbook. *God and His Creation* (\$6.50) edited by A. M. Henry, O.P. is the second volume in the Theology Library of Fides Publishers. More impressive than Volume One, it discusses the existence of God, the mystery of the Trinity, the creation of the world, of angels, and of man, and God's government of the universe, in a series of excellent articles by a number of priests, most of them French Dominicans. It is a book to make one look forward eagerly to the remaining volumes in the Theology Library scheduled to be published soon. *The Church Teaches* edited by the Jesuit Fathers of St. Mary's College (B. Herder, \$5.75) is a translation of important Church documents. It is an extremely valuable book, including as it does most of Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum* which is as yet unavailable in English.—D.D.

*Cleanse My Heart* (Newman, \$2.75) is a series of meditations on the Sunday Gospels written with the clarity, logic and brilliance usually found in the Jesuit mind. Originally the author, Vincent P. McCorry, S.J., did them for his weekly column in *America*. It is an excellent idea that they have been put into book form. Many times we are left with unanswered questions after Sunday Mass because the Gospel sermon had to be replaced by the needs of the foreign missions or the school building fund. No one could object to the few minutes on Saturday night which these meditations would take by way of briefing the family in the next day's Gospel.—J.G.F.

*Catch Us Those Little Foxes* (Regnery, \$1.50) is a little book which is a kind of external view of what it's like to be a Carmelite. The interior view, the dynamic life with God which is the core of the Carmelite's existence, is apparently not the sight which the Carmelite author wanted to show us. The exterior view, however, has a purpose, especially for anyone who is thinking of becoming a nun—of whatever species.—J.G.F.

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